

We Claim:

1. A brush rake for a grooming vehicle for smoothing loose, granular material, which comprises:

(a) a center brush having a hitch for connecting to the vehicle such that the center brush can be towed behind the vehicle; and

(b) a pair of side brushes pivotally connected to the center brush with a first side brush being pivotally connected to one lateral outer end of the center brush and a second side brush being pivotally connected to an opposite lateral outer end of the center brush.

2. The brush rake of claim 1, wherein the side brushes have laterally innermost ends that overlap the lateral outer ends of the center brush so that the center and side brushes groom an unbroken swath in a surface formed of loose granular material.

3. The brush rake of claim 1, wherein the center and side brushes have brush bristles for engaging and grooming the loose granular material, and wherein each side brush is pivotally connected to the center brush above a horizontal plane defined by the engagement of the brush bristles of each side brush and the loose granular material.

4. The brush rake of claim 1, wherein the center brush is operatively secured to a support beam, and wherein the side brushes are pivotally connected to the center brush by being pivotally connected to the support beam.

5. The brush rake of claim 4, wherein the center brush is rigidly fixed to the support beam.

6. The brush rake of claim 5, wherein the support beam has a top, and wherein the center brush is rigidly fixed to the support beam by at least one attachment member extending between and connected respectively to the top of the center brush and to the top of the support beam to rigidly fix the center brush and the support beam together.

7. The brush rake of claim 4, wherein the support beam is shorter than the center brush to permit laterally innermost ends of the side brushes to overlap the lateral outer ends of the center brush.

8. The brush rake of claim 1, wherein the center brush is heavier than either of the side brushes.

9. A vehicle for grooming a loose granular material surface, which comprises:

(a) a vehicle having substantially zero radius turn capability; and

(b) a trailing rake towed behind the vehicle for grooming the loose granular material surface in a grooming swath.

10. The vehicle of claim 9, wherein the vehicle and trailing rake are configured so that the vehicle is able to sufficiently tightly turn around on the loose granular material surface while the trailing rake engages the loose granular material surface to groom the loose granular material surface in adjacent side-by-side grooming swaths that overlap one another without leaving an ungroomed teardrop between the adjacent swaths at an inside corner of the turn.

11. The vehicle of claim 9, wherein the trailing rake is a brush rake.

12. The vehicle of claim 12, wherein the brush rake is formed of multiple brushes.

13. The vehicle of claim 11, wherein the brush rake includes a center brush and two side brushes pivotally connected to the center brush.

14. The vehicle of claim 13, wherein the side brushes are pivotally connected to the center brush at locations that permit the side brush on an inside of the turn to lift at its laterally outermost edge during the turn.

15. The vehicle of claim 13, wherein each side brush is pivotally connected to the center brush above a horizontal plane defined by the engagement of each side brush and the loose granular material.

16. The vehicle of claim 13, wherein each side brush is pivotally connected to the center brush for pivotal motion about a longitudinal, substantially horizontal pivot adjacent one end of the center brush.

17. The vehicle of claim 9, further including a brush lift on the vehicle for lifting the brush rake into and out of engagement with the loose granular material surface.

18. The vehicle of claim 17, wherein the brush lift is configured to permit the side brushes to pivot relative to the center brush during normal grooming of the loose granular material surface when the brush rake is in a lowered grooming position with the center and side brushes engaging the loose granular material.

19. The vehicle of claim 17, wherein the brush lift is configured to fold up the side brushes relative to the center

brush and then to lift the center brush to raise the brush rake out of its lowered grooming position and place the brush rake in a raised transport position.

20. The vehicle of claim 17, wherein the brush lift comprises a vertically movable lift rod carried on the vehicle, the lift rod being connected by flexible members to each of the side brushes for raising and lowering the brush rake.

21. A vehicle having a trailing brush rake towed behind the vehicle to groom a loose granular material surface, which comprises:

(a) a vehicle having a front caster wheel, two independently driven rear wheels, and twin control sticks for independently driving the rear wheels for spin turning of the vehicle; and

(b) a brush rake that includes at least one brush for engaging and smoothing the loose granular material.

22. The vehicle and brush rake of claim 21, wherein the brush rake includes a center brush and two pivotal side brushes extending laterally outwardly from opposite ends of the center brush.

23. The vehicle and brush rake of claim 22, wherein longitudinal pivots connect each side brush and the center brush.

24. The vehicle and brush rake of claim 23, wherein the pivots connecting the side brushes and the center brush are each elevated above a plane of engagement between each side brush and the loose granular material surface.